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ABSTRACT

Briefly described are classrooms in eight unusually successful elementary schools differing in size, grade levels, racial mix, community size and location, and percentage of low income parents. Most were well equipped, had computers and typewriters, and displayed students' work. (RH)

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WHAT DO CLASSROOMS IN UNUSUALLY SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS LOOK LIKE?

by

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One responsibility of Site Visitors for the 1985-86 Elementary School Recognition Program of the U. S. Department of Education* was to prepare descriptions of the physical environment of formal instructional settings.

Here are descriptions of classrooms in eight of these unusually successful schools along with notations about each school's enrollment, some other features of the school and community, and the building's construction dates. **Grades K-5: just under 400 students; 95% white; 8% from low income families; suburban community of less than 40,000 -- School building constructed in 1952 with additions in 1954.**

Each classroom and adjacent corridors of this school were filled with displays of student work, posters relating to current units of study, and charts and lists of student achievements.

In addition to computers in the computer lab, there was a computer in each fifth grade classroom (three) and one for each grade level, one through four (four).

Along with bulletin board displays, many rooms and some corridor space had mobiles and other displays of student projects. Each classroom had at least one typewriter for student use. Each had one or more globes. Screens for audio visuals and pull-down maps and charts were in each room.

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*The purpose of the Elementary School Recognition Program is to identify and call attention to a national group of unusually successful elementary schools. The program recognized 270 private and public schools in its first year (1985-86).

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Shelf space under classroom windows were filled with books, learning kits, and reference materials. Some classrooms had one or more aquariums for fish, amphibians, and/or small animals. There were posters relating to motivation, such as "Happiness is a Good Book" and "Enthusiasm" on a huge banner above one chalkboard. The daily schedule for classes and information relating to unit activities were on the chalkboards and/or newsprint.

Grades K-6; just under 600 students; 51% White; 40% Hispanic; 8% Black; one-third from low income families; small town of less than 25,000 near major city -- School building constructed in 1956.

There were numerous displays of student work inside each classroom and on many adjacent corridor walls of this school.

There were many posters relating to topics being studied in each classroom along with charts and graphs of student and class accomplishments. The rooms had moveable student chair/desks arranged in different ways from room to room. Most had one or more tables for small group and other work.

Shelf space beneath windows in each classroom and other storage spaces were filled with resource materials and supplies. All had screens for visual projections, pull-down maps and charts. Most had at least one globe -- one room had seven globes of various sizes.

Nearly every room had at least one typewriter and one classroom had six typewriters of different makes and vintage. The computer laboratory, located in the Learning Center (library) had eleven computers and two printers. A number of other computers were on mobile carts and, with the exception of those in special education, moved from room to room as needed.

Information relating to the day's schedule and unit assignments were on chalkboards. Classroom helpers were posted in various forms. Classroom rules and consequences also were posted.

Many rooms had several learning centers, some with listening equipment and other audio visual equipment. Two video cassette units were available in the school.

Grades 5-8; just under 300 students; 97% White; less than 3% from low income families; suburban community of less than 25,000 -- School building constructed in the 1930's with extensive renovation in the 1970's.

All the classrooms and instructional areas in this school were bright, colorful, and attractively decorated. With the exception of gym, music, shop, and home arts, all the classrooms were carpeted.

There were charts, posters, and other materials on the walls relating to the subject taught in that room. The room for Latin class had mobiles with the selected Latin names of the students. The science room had small animals in cages and displays relating to the subject currently being studied by one of the classes.

Most regular classrooms had desk chairs. The classroom for the gifted and some others had round tables for ease of working on group projects.

Grades K-5: just over 400 students; 93% White; one-third from low income families; small town of less than 25,000 -- School buillding constructed in 1957.

Each classroom building of this California-style campus included four classrooms joined together in the center with a teacher work and storage area for supplies and duplicating, audio-visual, and other equipment. Restrooms also were located in each building unit.

Each building unit housed a different grade level. The units were referred to as "Learning Communities." The fifth grade Learning Community also housed the art room. The music room was in the third grade Learning Community. The Media Center was in the fourth grade Learning Community.

Each classroom, except kindergarten, had a computer. All had listening stations and other audio visual learning centers. Desk and chairs were moveable and were grouped in different arrangements from classroom to classroom. Tables were in each classroom for use with small groups.

Bulletin boards were used throughout the school as learning centers and most classrooms had additional learning center elsewhere in the room. One classroom has a learning loft, a platform about 4' x 6' elevated some 4' off the floor.

Each room was filled with displays of student work and posters and charts relating to units being studied. Several rooms had mobiles of student produced materials. The alphabet, numbers and months of the year were above the chalkboards and bulletin board in the primary grade classrooms.

Classroom rules and consequences were posted in each room. Charts and other displays reflected student and class accomplishments. All rooms had pulldown screens, maps, and charts of various types. Most had globes and other types of audio visual equipment.

Grades K-6; nearly 350 students; 53% Black; 46% White; 70% from low income families; urban community -- School building constructed in 1953.

The alphabet and numbers were above the chalkboards in the primary grades of this school. Most classrooms had student-produced work on classroom walls and in adjacent corridors.

The social studies class had maps and a globe. A number of classrooms had colorful mobiles, some of student work.

Assignments were on the chalkboards or news print in nearly all classrooms. There were displays of students models of natural resources of various states in the science classroom. Posters relating to achievement and to behavior were on the walls of classrooms and elsewhere in the building.

Classroom for students in grades three through six each had two computers. There was one computer in each second grade classroom. Three computers were in the Media Center available for classroom use.

Moveable desk chairs and tables and chairs made it easy to arrange for different types of activities.

Grades 1-5; just over 600 students; 85% White; 15% Black; 7% from low income families; suburban community of less than 25,000 -- School building constructed in 1965.

All the classrooms in this school were extensively decorated with student work and materials relating to units of study. Permanent and temporary shelf space in each room were filled with supplementary materials, reference documents, and supplies.

Numerous learning centers or learning stations had been constructed in the primary classrooms. Two classrooms had study lofts with about 4' by 6' of study space some 5 feet off the ground and similar space on the floor below. The study lofts were designed and constructed by the spouses of teachers. The lofts were made of wood similar to sturdy playground equipment.

The day's schedule was on chalkboards of each classroom with additional details and assignments on many of them.

There were a dozen computers in the school on portable carts for ease of movement from room to room. One computer was permanently located in the Media Center and one was in the office.

The regular classrooms had moveable student desks arranged in various ways from room to room. Table space was provided in each room for working with small groups. Each classroom had a pulldown screen for visuals, one or more pulldown maps, and one or more globes.

In addition to displays of student work and unit-related posters and information, many classrooms had charts and graphs of student accomplishments and a list of student helpers for the day.

Grades K-5; nearly 700 students; 85% White; 13% Black, 15% from low income families; suburban community of nearly 80,000 -- School building constructed in 1962.

Every classroom in this school had numerous books and other learning materials available. Many had tables for groups of four to six students while others had desk chairs easily rearranged for different activities.

The primary grade classrooms had a carpeted space for group activities. The walls and sides of cabinets, space dividers, and nearby corridors were filled with student work, exhibits about units being studied, and displays relating to holidays and seasons. Many had pictures of student activities on the walls. Most had decorative mobiles hanging from the ceiling, and many were related to learning activities.

K-5; nearly 400 students; 94% White; 6% from low income families; suburban community of just over 3,000 -- School building constructed in the 1920's with periodic additions through the 1960's.

All the classrooms in this school were decorated with displays of students' work on the bulletin boards and walls and on adjacent corridor walls.

Many classrooms had posters and other materials relating to units currently being studied. Exhibits of photographs of students involved in class-related activities were common. There were charts and graphs of individual and class accomplishments in all the classrooms.

Daily schedules and unit assignments were on chalkboards and/or newsprint. All classrooms had at least one chalkboard on one wall. Each room had shelves and files for supplementary reading books and other materials. Science equipment items (telescope; microscope; etc.) were in the room for science. A number of classrooms had globes. All had screens and maps.

Posters such as "Strive for Excellence" and others were in many classrooms. Models of compound machines made by students were on display in one classroom. A map of the community and drawings by students of their homes were in another. One classroom has several models relating to the state's early history on display--forts, building, canals, etc.

Several classrooms had computers. The computer lab had 13 computers for student use.

The classrooms were carpeted. Most had moveable desk chairs and many had one or more tables for working with groups.